



# BULLYING and the BRAIN

Recent research on the neurological impacts of bullying has highlighted the importance of effective bullying prevention and intervention in schools. Many of the physical and mental health consequences of bullying result from changes in the way genes are activated or silenced when someone is victimized by their peers. Understanding the connections between these “invisible” scars and their mental, physical, and social expressions can help educators to better construct effective prevention and intervention strategies in schools.

**30%**

of children and youth are bullied occasionally

**7-10%**

of children and youth are bullied on a daily basis

**15-20%**

of children and youth have serious mental health problems



## far-reaching **CONSEQUENCES**

The long-term impacts of bullying can include:

Low self-esteem

Depression

Academic Difficulties

Social anxiety

Physical health problems

Loneliness

Substance use/abuse

Aggressive behaviour

## understanding how educators can reduce **the impacts of being bullied**

Educators have a great deal of power to foster the conditions in which all students can fare better. These conditions can not only reduce instances of bullying in the present, but also diminish the potential for long-term impacts when it occurs. Dr. Tracy Vaillancourt's research underscores the importance of social connection and a sense of belonging. In the classroom, foster the kind of learning environment in which students feel safe, welcomed, and included, and in which students are intrinsically motivated to treat one another with respect and kindness across the various dimensions of difference.



Develop co-created classroom norms with students that focus on how to treat one another. Intervene consistently and restoratively when these norms are violated.

Honour student voice through the regular use of community circles. Circles facilitate meaningful conversation between students and inspire a collaborative attitude about learning.



Empower students by placing them in the driver's seat of their own learning – Inquiry models of learning promote the development of critical thinking skills, creativity, independent thought, and collaboration skills.

Actively foster the development of collaboration and communication skills by creating activity groups on behalf of students and then explicitly guiding the equitable division of tasks.



Foster an inclusive learning environment that values all students for their uniqueness – Ensure that students of all identities can see themselves in the lessons, classroom resources, and assignments.

## building **healthy relationships**

Safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning spaces rest on the cultivation of healthy relationships. Educators may use the following strategies to build positive relationships with their students and among their students, and to maintain or restore these relationships when things go wrong.

### **Welcome each student every day**

### **Never apply a label to any student**

### **Prioritize the physical, social, and emotional well-being of all students consistently**

### **Ensure that all students feel that they matter**

### **Build trusting relationships with all students**

